IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) An automated method for aiding new product introduction, said method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

obtaining ~~inputting~~ merchant's data relating to a proposed new product ~~from a merchant~~,

wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of said proposed new product, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and a business objective, said business objective further comprising maximization of any of revenue, profit, and unit sales;

obtaining, from competitors' websites, competitors' data relating to competitors' products similar to said proposed new product,

wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

processing said competitors' data ~~relating to said similar products~~,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identifying a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the ~~processed~~ filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said product and

positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

        conducting conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

            wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

        conducting online market research ~~based on the identified attributes~~ to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

        ~~identifying~~ outputting at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research and completed conjoint data analysis, said at least one marketing mix comprising any of a product configuration, a product position, and a price for said proposed new product.

2-6.   (Canceled).

7.   (Currently Amended) An automated method for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product, said method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

        ~~obtaining~~ inputting merchant's data relating to one or more of a merchant's existing products,

            wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of each of said existing products, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and pricing;

        periodically obtaining competitors' data, from competitors' websites, relating to said competitors' products that are similar to said one or more of said merchant's ~~product~~ existing products,

            wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

        processing said competitors' data ~~relating to the similar products~~,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identifying a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the ~~processed~~ filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

detecting a change in the ~~identified~~ product and positioning attributes from said shortlist relating to at least one ~~similar~~ competitors' product that is similar to said one or more of said merchant's existing products; ~~and~~

conducting conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

conducting online market research to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

~~identifying~~ outputting said one or more of said merchant's existing products that require repositioning and/or repricing based on the detected change, a result of said online market research, and completed conjoint data analysis.

8-13. (Canceled).

14.   (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product comprising a computer readable medium comprising a computer program recorded therein for aiding new product introduction~~ storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform an automated method for aiding new product introduction, said ~~computer program product~~ method comprising:

~~computer program code means for obtaining data relating to said merchant's product;~~

~~computer program code means for obtaining, from competitors' websites, data relating to products similar to said merchant's product;~~

~~computer program code means for processing said data relating to the similar products;~~

~~computer program code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on the processed data;~~

~~computer program code means for conducting online market research based on the identified attributes; and~~

~~computer program code means for identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research~~

inputting merchant's data relating to a proposed new product,

wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of said proposed new product, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and a business objective, said business objective further comprising maximization of any of revenue, profit, and unit sales;

obtaining, from competitors' websites, competitors' data relating to competitors' products similar to said proposed new product,

wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

processing said competitors' data,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identifying a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

conducting conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

conducting online market research to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

outputting at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research and completed conjoint data analysis, said at least one marketing mix comprising any of a product configuration, a product position, and a price for said proposed new product.

15-19. (Canceled).

20. (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product comprising a computer readable medium comprising a computer program recorded therein for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product~~ storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform an

automated method for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product, said ~~computer program product~~ method comprising:

~~computer program code means for obtaining data relating to one or more of a merchant's products;~~

~~computer program code means for periodically obtaining data, from competitors' websites, relating to products similar to said merchant's product;~~

~~computer program code means for processing said data relating to the similar products;~~

~~computer program code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on the processed data;~~

~~computer program code means for detecting a change in the identified product and positioning attributes relating to a similar product; and~~

~~computer program code means for identifying one or more of said merchant's products that require repositioning and/or repricing based on the detected change~~

inputting merchant's data relating to one or more of a merchant's existing products,

wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of each of said existing products, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and pricing;

periodically obtaining competitors' data, from competitors' websites, relating to said competitors' products that are similar to said one or more of said merchant's existing products,

wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

processing said competitors' data,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identifying a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

detecting a change in the product and positioning attributes from said shortlist relating to at least one competitors' product that is similar to said one or more of said merchant's existing products;

conducting conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

conducting online market research to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

outputting said one or more of said merchant's existing products that require repositioning and/or repricing based on the detected change, a result of said online market research, and completed conjoint data analysis.

21-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) A system for aiding new product introduction, comprising:

a merchant input specification tool for obtaining data relating to a proposed new product;

a crawler for obtaining data relating to products similar to said proposed new product from competitors' websites, said data comprising product and positioning attributes;

a product filtering subsystem for filtering data of the similar products;

an attribute filtering subsystem for filtering said attributes of said similar products;

~~a mapping and clustering subsystem for identifying product and positioning attributes common to selected ones of said similar products based on the filtered data;~~

~~an online market research subsystem for identifying preferences based on said product and positioning attributes; and~~

~~an analysis and reporting subsystem for identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research~~

a memory that stores an inputted merchant's data relating to a proposed new product,

wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of said proposed new product, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and a business objective, said business objective further comprising maximization of any of revenue, profit, and unit sales; and

a processor configured to:

obtain, from competitors' websites, competitors' data relating to competitors' products similar to said proposed new product,

wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

process said competitors' data,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identify a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said

product and positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

conduct conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

conduct online market research to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

output at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research and completed conjoint data analysis, said at least one marketing mix comprising any of a product configuration, a product position, and a price for said proposed new product.

28-30.   (Canceled).

31.   (Currently Amended) A system for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product, comprising:

an input specification tool for obtaining data relating to a merchant's products;

a crawler for obtaining data relating to products similar to said merchant's products from competitors' websites, said data comprising product and positioning attributes;

a product filtering subsystem for filtering data of the similar products;

an attribute filtering subsystem for filtering said attributes of said similar products;

a mapping and clustering subsystem for identifying product and positioning attributes common to selected ones of said similar products based on the filtered data;

an online market research subsystem for identifying preferences based on said product and positioning attributes;

an analysis and reporting subsystem for identifying at least one marketing mix for one or more of said merchant's products based on a result of said online market research; and

a scheduler for causing periodic operation of said crawler and the subsystems

a memory that stores an inputted merchant's data relating to one or more of a merchant's existing products,

wherein said merchant's data comprises product attributes and positioning attributes of each of said existing products, product attribute value ranges and positioning attribute value ranges of interest to said merchant, and pricing; and

a processor configured to:

periodically obtain competitors' data, from competitors' websites, relating to said competitors' products that are similar to said one or more of said merchant's existing products,

wherein said competitor's data comprises product attribute name-value pairs, positioning attribute name-vale pairs, and pricing associated with each of said competitors' products, said pricing further comprising any of list price, discounts, and credit terms;

process said competitors' data,

wherein said processing comprises filtering said competitors' data according to merchant selected value ranges for said product and positioning attributes;

identify a shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes based on the filtered competitors' data,

wherein each of said competitors' products is mapped to said shortlist of product attributes and positioning attributes,

wherein holes are identified in a map of said short list of product attributes, where no said competitors' products exist,

wherein each of said holes is classified as attractive or unattractive, and

wherein clusters of said competitors' products with similar product attributes from said shortlist are formed, said forming of clusters being based on values of said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist, and using a distance metric that factors in said business objective; and

detect a change in the product and positioning attributes from said shortlist relating to at least one competitors' product that is similar to said one or more of said merchant's existing products;

conduct conjoint data analysis on said clusters to identify said product and positioning attributes from said shortlist associated with a product's success,

wherein said conjoint data analysis on said clusters is incomplete due to inadequate competitors' data;

conduct online market research to obtain further competitors' data sufficient to completely analyze said clusters by conjoint data analysis; and

output said one or more of said merchant's existing products that require repositioning and/or repricing based on the detected change, a result of said online market research, and completed conjoint data analysis.

32-35. (Canceled).